



# Catholic Faith, Life & Creed

*A Complete Catechesis for Christian Living*

Doctrinal Catechesis Session  
Mary Birmingham

## The Eucharistic Prayer



Loaves and Fishes. Mark Hakomaki, 2007.



## Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### Opening prayer

Option 1: Use Opening Prayer from the Sunday Liturgy.

Option 2: Use the prayer given below.

### Prayer of Pope Clement XI

Lord, I believe in you: increase my faith.

I trust in you: strengthen my trust.

I love you: let me love you more and more.

I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow.

I worship you as my first beginning.

I long for you as my last end.

I praise you as my constant helper.

And I call you as my loving protector.

I want to do what you ask of me:

In the way you ask, for as long as you ask, because you ask it.

Let me love you Lord as my God.

And see myself as I really am: a pilgrim in this world.

A Christian called to respect and love all those lives I touch.



### Note to the Catechist

There may be more material than you can use in a one-hour session.  
Select and arrange accordingly. Use questions and material that is best  
suited for your particular group.



## Read the connecting statement

to draw the line between this week's  
liturgy and this chosen doctrinal theme.

This connecting statement is found in the *Breaking  
Open the Word* worksheet for this week.

### Catholic Faith, Life & Creed Version 2.0

© Mary Birmingham, 2011.

All rights reserved.

Version 2.0 reflects all recent revisions in  
the Roman Missal.

NIHIL OBSTAT

Rev. Steven Olds

Censor Liborum

IMPRIMATUR

† Most Rev. John Noonan

Bishop of Orlando

June 27, 2011

Editors: Bill Huebsch, Diana  
Macalintal, & Nick Wagner

Published cooperatively by  
TeamRCIA.com and  
PastoralPlanning.com.

Catechist opens with this reminder:

- ▶ In another session, we consider the Liturgy of the Word. In this session, we will address the Liturgy of the Eucharist, particularly the Eucharistic Prayer.

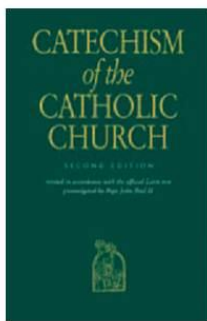


## Sharing Human Experience

Catechist leads participants in a small group sharing exercise. Break into small groups. Remind participants to make time for all in the group to respond.

- ▶ The word, “Eucharist” is probably the most used word in the Catholic Church.
- ▶ It is the heart of Roman Catholicism.
- ▶ What does Eucharist mean to you?
- ▶ What do you believe about the Eucharist?

Catechist uses their responses to launch into a discussion about Liturgy of the Eucharist and the Eucharistic Prayer.



## Sharing Catholic Doctrine

Drawn from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Refer to articles 1352-1355.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following question in the wider group.

- ▶ What does it mean to be a Eucharistic people?

Catechist continues:

- ▶ To be a eucharistic people means that we are committed to living a eucharistic life, a life patterned after Christ, a life in which we are willing to break open our lives and shed our blood for others just as Jesus did for us.
- ▶ The Eucharistic Prayer brings us into that mystery.

- ▶ We are all capable of giving a definition of Eucharist. It means to give God thanks and praise.
- ▶ Explaining it and owning are two different matters.
- ▶ The Eucharist invites and challenges us to make it an integral part of our lived experience.
- ▶ The Eucharist celebrates and makes present the relationship God has with his people.
- ▶ The Eucharist presumes that we have converted hearts. We can proclaim the Word, but if it falls on deaf ears it is like the seed that fell on thorny ground.

Catechist shares this story with the group:

A very smart, young man was raised up by a community and was sent to college. After he graduated, the big day had arrived when he would read the Scriptures in church. Everyone was breathless. The young man approached the pulpit and read the Twenty-Third Psalm. Everyone cheered. The very next week an elderly woman got up to read the Twenty-Third Psalm. Everyone wept. The following week they went to the pastor and asked, “Why did we weep for her and shout for him”? He answered them: “Our young man came back and beautifully read the Twenty-Third Psalm. The old woman, on the other hand, knew the Shepherd.”

- ▶ If we are to make the Eucharist our own, we must seriously ask ourselves if we are simply going through the motions of celebration or do we know the Shepherd?

Catechist invites participants to briefly respond to the following questions in dyads, then share insights with the wider group.

- ▶ How intimately do you know the Shepherd?
- ▶ What evidence is there in your life that you know the Shepherd intimately?
- ▶ How do you know that you know him?

Catechist continues:

- ▶ Making the Eucharist an integral part of our lives presupposes conversion of heart.
- ▶ The heart of our Catholic identity is that we are a eucharistic people and that liturgy is the source and summit of all we do, the most important thing we do!
- ▶ We draw life and power from sharing in the Eucharist.
- ▶ Eucharist means so much more than coming together to individually receive Christ in the elements of bread of wine.
- ▶ Eucharist commits us to one another.
- ▶ Eucharist is intimately connected to everyday life.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in small groups, then share insights in the wider group.

- ▶ If you are preparing for baptism in the Catholic Church, you have been celebrating Eucharist at the table of God’s Word.
  - Describe ways in which your everyday life has been affected by your participation in the Liturgy of the Word thus far?
- ▶ For those who are not similarly preparing, simply respond to the same question and omit “thus far.”

Catechist continues:

- ▶ Ultimately, we come together, we are fed, we are nourished, and we are sent out so that we can nourish others.
- ▶ We allow others to feed off of us, so that emptied, we come back again to be filled and nourished again.
- ▶ Repeatedly, we live the death and resurrection of Christ in our lives.
- ▶ Repeatedly, we join the joys and sorrows of our lives to the Cross of Christ.
- ▶ The Eucharist gives us the strength to continue the journey of life.
- ▶ What we do here is extremely connected to the living of our lives.
- ▶ Scripture affirms that reality.

Catechist reads aloud 1 Kings 19:1-8

Catechist continues with these remarks:

- ▶ The story about Elijah and the broom tree show us how intimately Eucharist is connected to our life's journey.
- ▶ God gives us bread for the journey.
- ▶ Elijah is beaten and broken. He is afraid and very alone and went alone to the desert. He prayed for death.
- ▶ What did the angel do? (Angels are traditionally epiphanies and manifestations of God's presence.) The angel ordered him to get up and eat, not once, but twice. Why? Eat, or the journey would be too long for him.
- ▶ Life's journey will be too long and hard without the nourishment of life-giving bread. God was present to Elijah in the bread—the bread of presence, the bread of nourishment.
- ▶ The word *companion* comes from the Latin root *cum* ("with") joined to *panis* ("bread"). A companion is one who breaks bread with us. Table fellowship is a covenant relationship. Meal fellowship is the most intimate thing we can do.
- ▶ Eucharist answers the question: "What happens when all is lost?"
- ▶ For Elijah, God gave him bread twice!
- ▶ God promises, "I will be with you." Today, God still uses bread and other symbols as a sign of his presence: light, cross, water, word, hands, oil, bread, and wine.
- ▶ God used signs from our everyday world, things we can touch, taste, feel, enter into, and consume as tangible signs of his presence.
- ▶ For Elijah, it was bread; for us, it is still bread. Bread and other symbols are signs of our faith that make real for us the presence of Christ. God promises I will be with you, and he gives us bread as a sign—bread for Elijah, bread for us.
- ▶ Jesus left the same sign for us. He promised he would be forever present to us in the bread. When we gather for Eucharist, we discover we are all part of the same family. We consume the eucharistic bread, and Jesus consumes us.
- ▶ Eucharist is the most intimate thing we can do when it comes to our relationship with God.



Catechist leads a brief large group discussion and uses their responses to lead into next segment.

- ▶ Think of the best family meal you can remember.
- ▶ Why is the family meal important for families?
- ▶ What takes place at the family meal?

Catechist continues:

- ▶ When we celebrate the family meal, we share a bond with one another. We are committed to one another. In a sense we share a COVENANT of identity with other family members.
- ▶ The most important theme in Scripture is COVENANT.
- ▶ Yet, Jesus used it only once.
- ▶ The Last Supper is the only time Jesus used the word COVENANT. It was in the context of his last meal. God was forging a new covenant with humanity realized through the sacrifice of his Son. Jesus was telling us that he was doing something new.
- ▶ Jesus was telling his friends: “Each year, you remember the covenant I made with my people when I delivered them out of bondage in Egypt. You remember that covenant with the Passover meal. What I am doing here is the new and ultimate covenant. This COVENANT will be memorialized by a new meal—bread as my body, wine as my blood.”
- ▶ Jesus gave us a new covenant, and to continue that covenant he gave us a ritual meal to share until he returns.
- ▶ That COVENANT is fully expressed in the celebration of Eucharist—especially the Eucharistic Prayer.

## Liturgy of the Eucharist

- ▶ The Word of God proclaimed in the Liturgy of the Word invites conversion and faith. Such faith demands a response on our part.
- ▶ Eucharist is the way we respond to God’s Word. We, like Christ, offer our complete and total selves in surrender to God as we give him thanks and praise.
- ▶ Our response is to stand before the Lord’s altar table to give God our thanks and praise—and to take, bless, break, and share the Bread of Life.
- ▶ One minor preparatory rite before the Eucharistic Prayer is the preparation of the altar table.
- ▶ As the people sit to spiritually prepare to offer the best of themselves in the eucharistic sacrifice, the gifts needed for the celebration are prepared and presented.

## Preparation of Gifts

- ▶ We prepare our hearts to give God our heartfelt gratitude for all God has done.
- ▶ We should be thinking of all the reasons we are thankful to God.
- ▶ We want to bring signs of our thanks and place them on this altar table.

- ▶ Our gifts are brought forward—again in thanks for all God has accomplished in our lives.
- ▶ Gifts of support for the parish and gifts for the poor are presented.
- ▶ The Eucharistic Prayer is reminiscent of Jewish table prayer in which we praise God’s saving works.
- ▶ We recall his salvific works of creation, redemption, and sanctification.
- ▶ We recall all God has accomplished in the salvation of the world.
- ▶ There are seven very important parts of the Eucharistic Prayer.
- ▶ Even though the priest prays the prayer interspersed with our responses, it is nevertheless the prayer of the whole Church. He prays the prayer on our behalf.

Catechist invites participants to break into three groups.

- ✓ Group One reads #1 and #2, PREFACE AND EPICLESIS
- ✓ Group Two reads #3, #4, WORDS OF INSTITUTION / CONSECRATION/ ANAMNESIS
- ✓ Group Three reads #5, #6, #7, OFFERING / INTERCESSIONS / DOXOLOGY

Allow five to seven minutes to read and discuss. Ask each group to appoint a spokesperson to report back to the wider group. The provided handout will be necessary to accomplish this exercise.

### **One element of the Eucharistic Prayer is called: Preface**

- ▶ In the Preface, we proclaim salvation history. We tell the great deeds of God since the creation of the world.
- ▶ We give God thanks for all God has accomplished. We are in such awe that we can do no less than shout our praise. Eucharist means to give thanks and praise.
- ▶ We enter into holy dialogue with God.
- ▶ Before we enter into complete union with Christ in the Eucharistic Prayer and Communion Rite, we must engage in giving thanks and praise to our Father who knows us best and loves us most.
  - The priest prays: “The Lord be with you.”
  - We respond: “And with your spirit.”
  - We are exhorted: “Lift up your hearts.”
  - Again we respond: “We lift them up to the Lord.”
- ▶ We lift the totality of our complete selves to God. We lift our best selves; we lift our minds and hearts to God.
- ▶ The priest reminds us to offer thanks and praise: “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.” We affirm that we can do no less: “It is right and just.” What then is our response to the gifts our Creator has given us?
  - We loudly affirm our response. We sing the joyful song of the angels: “Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts.”
  - We lift our hearts—our very selves to the throne of God.
  - We give God thanks and praise for the great works of creation and for the re-creation of our own lives.

### **Another element of the Eucharistic Prayer is called: Epiclesis**

(a Greek word which means, to invoke)

- ▶ The Church asks God to send the Holy Spirit, to bless and change the gifts of bread and wine so they may become Christ's body and blood.
- ▶ We ask that the Holy Spirit come upon the gifts and make them holy.
- ▶ Through outstretched hands, the symbol and gesture that is used to invoke the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine, as well as the community, are changed into the body and blood of Christ.
- ▶ Bread changes into Christ's body. Wine changes into Christ's blood. The word the Church uses for this miracle is called "transubstantiation."
- ▶ We, too, are changed just as the bread and wine are changed. We are not to leave the celebration the same person we were when we arrived. We ask to become more fully the body of Christ in the world. We ask to participate more fully in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. We too become Christ's body and blood, broken and poured out.

### **Another element of the Eucharistic Prayer is called: The words of institution, or the consecration**

- ▶ The words of institution form a narrative, a story. We tell the story, and we remember the story of the Last Supper and the Lord's command to us. We remember that this is Jesus' last meal before his death. We do what Jesus commanded us to do.
- ▶ We remember what he said and what he did, and we do what he commanded us to do in his memory. We do what he asked as a memorial. We repeat the same four actions Jesus commanded that we repeat.
  - We take (1), we bless (2), we break (3), and we share (4) the Bread of Life and the Blood of the new Covenant.
- ▶ This is not a singular magical moment in which everything we believe about Eucharist happens. The entire Eucharistic Prayer is needed to effect the change of bread, wine, and community into his body and blood.
- ▶ We cannot simply say those words, and the Eucharist comes before us; we need the entire prayer to effect the change. Even though the consecration is considered a premier moment in the liturgy, so is the entire prayer.
- ▶ When we tell the story of the Last Supper, we bring Jesus' meal with his friends into our presence. Jesus promised that through the power of his Spirit his Last Supper would become present for us each time we gather to celebrate it. We experience his presence even in his absence.
- ▶ We repeatedly remember and make present Christ's broken body and his blood poured out for all. Jesus' blood is the fullest sign of the Covenant. Jesus shed his blood for us. "It will be shed for you and for many."
- ▶ Why did Jesus shed his blood?
  - Jesus shed his blood for the forgiveness of sin.
  - The Catholic Church is not a resort for saints; it is a hospital for sinners.



- The Eucharist is the primary sacrament of reconciliation.
- We celebrate the Eucharist not because we are healthy but because we need to become healthy.
- ▶ Theologian Ronald Rohlheiser tells us that God's love is scandalously lavish. He insists that we want to squirm over such lavishness and we often consider it cheap grace. Yet in the end we are reminded that God's ways are not our ways. The lavishness of God's unconditional love is experienced in God's absolute, unremitting forgiveness. "The God who is the transcendent creator of all the universe is as accessible as the nearest water tap!"
- ▶ The fountain of that forgiveness is the sacrifice of Calvary that is re-presented for us every Sunday

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in small groups, then surface insights in the wider group.

- ▶ What does it mean to you that it is in taking, blessing, breaking, and sharing Jesus' body and blood that you are taken, blessed, broken, and shared as well?
- ▶ What are the implications of this truth for your life?
- ▶ For whom in our world are we called to break our bodies and pour out our blood?

#### **Another element of the Eucharistic Prayer is called: Anamnesis**

- ▶ Anamnesis is a Greek word that means, "a remembering that makes that which is being remembered present."
- ▶ Jesus did not say: "Pray this in memory." He told us to "*DO*" this. He commanded us to act. He commanded us to keep the memory alive.
- ▶ We remember what he did: he took bread, blessed it, broke it, and shared it. He shed his blood on the cross, and in the remembering, his ultimate sacrifice is made present to us today.
- ▶ Remembering keeps alive his passion, death, and resurrection and re-presents it before us every week. Every Sunday is thus an Easter event.
- ▶ We keep Jesus' memory by doing what he commanded us to do: take bread, bless it, break it, and share it. We look to the future banquet, and we remember that the meal we celebrate is united with the banquet of heaven.
- ▶ We are rehearsing for our participation in the future heavenly banquet. (Our worship has a long way to go before it looks like the worship in heaven.)

Catechist shares a story of the importance of the Eucharistic Prayer. See Appendix #1.

#### **Another element of the Eucharistic Prayer is called: Offering**

- ▶ We not only offer our sacrifice of praise and thanks but we also offer ourselves.
- ▶ We offer our genuine selves, our joys, accomplishments, our sorrow, and our failures. We offer our lives; we join our lives to the paschal mystery of Christ.

- ▶ We bring our authentic selves. We offer all that we are and all that we hope to become.
- ▶ We recall that God told the prophet Isaiah not to offer him sacrifices and burnt offerings. God wants our hearts. In the Eucharistic Prayer we offer our hearts. We offer all that we are—our human joys, accomplishments, sorrows, and failures. We place all of it on the altar table.
- ▶ A spirituality of the eucharistic liturgy assumes that we are willing to offer all that we are, all that we hope to become, to God and trust that we will be transformed into his image, that which we were created to be.

**Another element of the Eucharistic Prayer is called: Intercessions**

- ▶ We join our prayer with all those saints who went before us. We pray in chorus together with all the saints in heaven and earth (the communion of saints).
- ▶ We exercise our role as priest, prophet, and king, and we pray for all who still walk this earthly sojourn as they journey toward their eternal banquet in heaven.
- ▶ We ask God to remember our Church, world, and those who have died.

**The final element of the Eucharistic Prayer is called: the doxology.**

- ▶ We bring the Eucharistic Prayer to its conclusion by our thunderous clamor of praise to the Divine Name, to our Triune God, to the Trinity.
- ▶ We praise the Father through the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ We can do no less than praise the Triune majesty in all God's glory.
- ▶ We joyfully lift our voices as we pray in union with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to give the Father the honor due his name.
- ▶ We can again do no less than say, "Amen, Amen, Amen!" Let it be so, let it be so, let it be so!
- ▶ It is important to remember that the entire Eucharistic Prayer consecrates. The entire prayer—the act of taking, blessing, offering, invoking, remembering, praying, thanking, and praising—all of it is needed to accomplish what Christ commanded us to do in his name.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions. Ask one question at a time, and elicit responses from the group before going on to the next question.

Let us review, share, and discuss what we just read, heard, and shared together.

Preface:

- ✓ What are we doing in the preface?
- ✓ Why are we doing it?
- ✓ What does the preface proclaim?

Epiclesis:

- ✓ What is taking place in the epiclesis?
- ✓ What does that word mean?
- ✓ What is changed in the epiclesis?
- ✓ What happens to the bread and wine?
- ✓ What happens to us?

Words of Institution/Consecration:

- ✓ What is taking place in the words of institution/consecration?
- ✓ What are we doing?
- ✓ Why are we doing it?
- ✓ What are the four actions in the narrative, and what do they mean?

Anamnesis:

- ✓ What does the anamnesis accomplish?
- ✓ What are we doing in that action, and why are we doing it?
- ✓ What is being remembered and made present in the Eucharistic Prayer?
- ✓ What happens when we remember what Jesus told us to do?
- ✓ What happens in the remembering?
- ✓ What are we bringing into our midst?

Offering:

- ✓ What takes place in the offering?
- ✓ Why is this important for our lives?
- ✓ What is it we are offering?

Intercessions:

- ✓ For whom do we pray in the intercessions of the Eucharistic Prayer?

Doxology:

- ✓ What is the doxology?
- ✓ What does it express?
- ✓ Why is it important?



## Community Connections

Catechist shares a story from his or her life or invites a parishioner to witness to the importance of the Eucharistic Prayer in their lives. See appendix #2 for an example.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following question in dyads.

- In what way might the Eucharistic Prayer bring meaning to what is taking place in your life right now?

Liturgy, Scripture, and doctrine challenge us to transform our lives so that we can go out and help transform the world.

Catechist invites participants to give of themselves and to feed others. Catechist informs the group of parish activities taking place and makes arrangements for group participation. For example: “This week, our parish is responsible for cooking the meal on Wednesday night for our city’s homeless shelter. We are going to meet at Daily Bread to serve the meal, and then we will reflect on our experience after we have cleaned up.”

### Journal

Write or reflect on the various elements of the Eucharistic Prayer this week.



## Mystagogy & your decision for change

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions.

- ▶ What is the challenge of the Eucharist in your life?
- ▶ If the Eucharistic Prayer invites you to nourish others with your own life and to shed your blood for others, what needs to change in your life to more fully embrace this awesome responsibility?
- ▶ Are you willing to commit to a specific spiritual and corporal work of mercy this week?



## Closing Prayer

Option 1: If this is a catechumenal session, end the session with Intercessions and Doxology (“Glory be to the Father...”) or a minor rite—a blessing or minor exorcism, RCIA # 90-97.

Option 2: Pray the Preface “Holy Eucharist II” (Sacramentary, P48), and include intercessions and a sign of peace.

## Appendix

### IMPORTANCE OF THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

#1. A priest shared how he had been out of parish work for several years and wanted to return. He held a national post and wanted to return to his diocese, which, incidentally, was experiencing the worst shortage of priests in the United States.

He was assigned to a parish. They had not celebrated Eucharist for over a year because of the illness of the pastor. They had been celebrating the Liturgy of the Word and were receiving Communion, but they were not celebrating the entire Mass. In other words, the Eucharistic Prayer was not prayed and Eucharist was in the form of bread consecrated at a Mass other than the one they were celebrating.

What disturbed this priest the most is the fact that the people did not even miss it. They did not know what they were missing. This priest blamed this on those of us who are responsible for teaching about the Eucharist. He maintained that we have not done a good job of communicating that it is in the Eucharistic Prayer, in which we take, bless, break, and share the Bread of Life, that we, too, are taken, blessed, and broken and we, too, share our lives. He maintains if we were better at communicating this truth, the people would have been knocking down doors to have the entire Mass celebrated.

#2. Within every sacrament we experience the total *kenosis* (“self-emptying”) of Jesus on the cross. In the Eucharistic Prayer, we remember what Jesus did the night before he died. We also remember his passion and death, the sacrifice of Calvary that would take place the next day. In the Eucharistic Prayer we make that sacrifice present; its saving effects are brought into our midst.

One theologian insists that in every sacrament the final self-emptying of Jesus is present. We enter his mystery. He maintains that the drama of the cross, the wretched sorrow of the Son who knew his Father could save him and the Father who remained silent, is brought front and center in the celebration of the sacrament. Jesus had work left to do. If he was to truly experience humanity in its totality, then he had to experience the absolute separation of death. Human beings are utterly alone as they stand on the threshold of death. Family may hover in loving sorrow, but the dying person faces death alone. He or she crosses that threshold completely and utterly alone. Jesus had to experience the aloneness each of us will face before he could complete his work.

A very dear man recently struggled with cancer and lost his valiant fight. The Eucharist sustained him throughout his ordeal. Strengthened by the Eucharist, he allowed his life to be taken, blessed, broken, and shared for others. He offered his pain and suffering for the ongoing work of Christ’s redemption of the world. It gave him great meaning as he journeyed toward the portal of death and into eternity.



I had the privilege of being with him the day before he died. I saw first-hand a little of what Jesus probably felt. The wonderful man, in spite of the great love he had for his wife, children, and grandchildren, simply wanted to be alone in his final hours. He was in communion with God in the midst of his final labor. God prepared him for death. Over the months, this servant of the Lord slowly emptied himself and joined his suffering to the sacrifice of Christ made present on the altar. His final self-emptying came amid the silent whisper of peaceful submission.

Every time we come to the celebration of the Eucharist we are invited to empty ourselves as offering for those who are most abandoned and in so doing share in the ongoing redemption of the cross. What Christ says to us in the sacraments is: “Do you know how much I love you? This much.” Then he stretched out his arms and he entered into his Paschal Mystery, he died and rose. That is what we remember in the Eucharistic Prayer. That is what gives our life its deepest meaning.

## Handout: Eucharistic Prayer

### Liturgy of the Eucharist

- ▶ The Word of God proclaimed in the Liturgy of the Word invites conversion and faith. Such faith demands a response on our part.
- ▶ Eucharist is the way we respond to God's Word. We, like Christ, offer our complete and total selves in surrender to God as we give him thanks and praise.
- ▶ Our response is to stand before the Lord's altar table to give God our thanks and praise—and to take, bless, break, and share the Bread of Life.
- ▶ One minor preparatory rite before the Eucharistic Prayer is the preparation of the altar table.
- ▶ As the people sit to spiritually prepare to offer the best of themselves in the Eucharistic sacrifice, the gifts needed for the celebration are prepared and presented.

### Preparation of Gifts

- ▶ We prepare our hearts to give God our heartfelt gratitude for all God has done.
- ▶ We should be thinking of all the reasons we are thankful to God.
- ▶ We want to bring signs of our thanks and place them on this altar table.
- ▶ Our gifts are brought forward—again in thanks for all God has accomplished in our lives.
- ▶ Gifts of support for the parish and gifts for the poor are presented.
- ▶ The Eucharistic Prayer is reminiscent of Jewish table prayer in which we praise God's saving works.
- ▶ We recall his salvific works of creation, redemption, and sanctification.
- ▶ We recall all God has accomplished in the salvation of the world.
- ▶ There are seven very important parts of the Eucharistic Prayer.
- ▶ Even though the priest prays the prayer interspersed with our responses, it is nevertheless the prayer of the whole Church. He prays the prayer on our behalf.

### One element of the Eucharistic Prayer is called: Preface

- ▶ In the Preface, we proclaim salvation history. We tell the great deeds of God since the creation of the world.
- ▶ We give God thanks for all God has accomplished. We are in such awe that we can do no less than shout our praise. Eucharist means to give thanks and praise.
- ▶ We enter into holy dialogue with God.
- ▶ Before we enter into complete union with Christ in the Eucharistic Prayer and Communion Rite, we must engage in giving thanks and praise to our Father who knows us best and loves us most.
  - The priest prays: "The Lord be with you."
  - We respond: "And with your spirit."
  - We are exhorted: "Lift up your hearts."

- Again we respond: “We lift them up to the Lord.”
- ▶ We lift the totality of our complete selves to God. We lift our best selves; we lift our minds and hearts to God.
- ▶ The priest reminds us to offer thanks and praise: “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.” We affirm that we can do no less: “It is right and just.” What then is our response to the gifts our Creator has given us?
  - We loudly affirm our response. We sing the joyful song of the angels: “Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts.”
  - We lift our hearts—our very selves to the throne of God.
  - We give God thanks and praise for the great works of creation and for the re-creation of our own lives.

### **Another element of the Eucharistic Prayer is called: Epiclesis**

(a Greek word which means, to invoke)

- ▶ The Church asks God to send the Holy Spirit, to bless and change the gifts of bread and wine so they may become Christ’s body and blood.
- ▶ We ask that the Holy Spirit come upon the gifts and make them holy.
- ▶ Through outstretched hands, the symbol and gesture that is used to invoke the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine, as well as the community, are changed into the body and blood of Christ.
- ▶ Bread changes into Christ’s body. Wine changes into Christ’s blood. The word the Church uses for this miracle is called “transubstantiation.”
- ▶ We, too, are changed just as the bread and wine are changed. We are not to leave the celebration the same person we were when we arrived. We ask to become more fully the body of Christ in the world. We ask to participate more fully in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. We too become Christ’s body and blood, broken and poured out.

### **Another element of the Eucharistic Prayer is called: The words of institution, or the consecration**

- ▶ The words of institution form a narrative, a story. We tell the story, and we remember the story of the Last Supper and the Lord’s command to us. We remember that this is Jesus’ last meal before his death. We do what Jesus commanded us to do.
- ▶ We remember what he said and what he did, and we do what he commanded us to do in his memory. We do what he asked as a memorial. We repeat the same four actions Jesus commanded that we repeat.
  - We take (1), we bless (2), we break (3), and we share (4) the Bread of Life and the Blood of the new Covenant.
- ▶ This is not a singular magical moment in which everything we believe about Eucharist happens. The entire Eucharistic Prayer is needed to effect the change of bread, wine, and community into his body and blood.

- ▶ We cannot simply say those words, and the Eucharist comes before us; we need the entire prayer to effect the change. Even though the consecration is considered a premier moment in the liturgy, so is the entire prayer.
- ▶ When we tell the story of the Last Supper, we bring Jesus' meal with his friends into our presence. Jesus promised that through the power of his Spirit his Last Supper would become present for us each time we gather to celebrate it. We experience his presence even in his absence.
- ▶ We repeatedly remember and make present Christ's broken body and his blood poured out for all. Jesus' blood is the fullest sign of the Covenant. Jesus shed his blood for us. "It will be shed for you and for many."
- ▶ Why did Jesus shed his blood?
  - Jesus shed his blood for the forgiveness of sin.
  - The Catholic Church is not a resort for saints; it is a hospital for sinners.
  - The Eucharist is the primary sacrament of reconciliation.
  - We celebrate the Eucharist not because we are healthy but because we need to become healthy.
- ▶ Theologian Ronald Rohlheiser tells us that God's love is scandalously lavish. He insists that we want to squirm over such lavishness and we often consider it cheap grace. Yet in the end we are reminded that God's ways are not our ways. The lavishness of God's unconditional love is experienced in God's absolute, unremitting forgiveness. "The God who is the transcendent creator of all the universe is as accessible as the nearest water tap!"
- ▶ The fountain of that forgiveness is the sacrifice of Calvary that is re-presented for us every Sunday

#### **Another element of the Eucharistic Prayer is called: Anamnesis**

- ▶ Anamnesis is a Greek word that means, "a remembering that makes that which is being remembered present."
- ▶ Jesus did not say: "Pray this in memory." He told us to "*DO*" this. He commanded us to act. He commanded us to keep the memory alive.
- ▶ We remember what he did: he took bread, blessed it, broke it, and shared it. He shed his blood on the cross, and in the remembering, his ultimate sacrifice is made present to us today.
- ▶ Remembering keeps alive his passion, death, and resurrection and re-presents it before us every week. Every Sunday is thus an Easter event.
- ▶ We keep Jesus' memory by doing what he commanded us to do: take bread, bless it, break it, and share it. We look to the future banquet, and we remember that the meal we celebrate is united with the banquet of heaven.
- ▶ We are rehearsing for our participation in the future heavenly banquet. (Our worship has a long way to go before it looks like the worship in heaven.)

Catechist shares a story of the importance of the Eucharistic Prayer. See Appendix #1.

### **Another element of the Eucharistic Prayer is called: Offering**

- ▶ We not only offer our sacrifice of praise and thanks but we also offer ourselves.
- ▶ We offer our genuine selves, our joys, accomplishments, our sorrow, and our failures. We offer our lives; we join our lives to the paschal mystery of Christ.
- ▶ We bring our authentic selves. We offer all that we are and all that we hope to become.
- ▶ We recall that God told the prophet Isaiah not to offer him sacrifices and burnt offerings. God wants our hearts. In the Eucharistic Prayer we offer our hearts. We offer all that we are—our human joys, accomplishments, sorrows, and failures. We place all of it on the altar table.
- ▶ A spirituality of the Eucharistic liturgy assumes that we are willing to offer all that we are, all that we hope to become, to God and trust that we will be transformed into his image, that which we were created to be.

### **Another element of the Eucharistic Prayer is called: Intercessions**

- ▶ We join our prayer with all those saints who went before us. We pray in chorus together with all the saints in heaven and earth (the communion of saints).
- ▶ We exercise our role as priest, prophet, and king, and we pray for all who still walk this earthly sojourn as they journey toward their eternal banquet in heaven.
- ▶ We ask God to remember our Church, world, and those who have died.

### **The final element of the Eucharistic Prayer is called: the doxology.**

- ▶ We bring the Eucharistic Prayer to its conclusion by our thunderous clamor of praise to the Divine Name, to our Triune God, to the Trinity.
- ▶ We praise the Father through the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ We can do no less than praise the Triune majesty in all God's glory.
- ▶ We joyfully lift our voices as we pray in union with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to give the Father the honor due his name.
- ▶ We can again do no less than say, "Amen, Amen, Amen!" Let it be so, let it be so, let it be so!
- ▶ It is important to remember that the entire Eucharistic Prayer consecrates. The entire prayer—the act of taking, blessing, offering, invoking, remembering, praying, thanking, and praising—all of it is needed to accomplish what Christ commanded us to do in his name.